



County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Project Name: Sweetwater Reservoir Loop Trail

Project Number(s): COFD-00251

This document is considered DRAFT until it is adopted by the appropriate County of San Diego decision-making body.

This Mitigated Negative Declaration is comprised of this form along with the following supporting environmental documentation:

- a. Initial Study Form
- b. Environmental Analysis Form and attached extended studies for Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Water Quality

I. California Environmental Quality Act Mitigated Negative Declaration Findings

Find, that this Mitigated Negative Declaration reflects the decision-making body's independent judgment and analysis, and; that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information contained in this Mitigated Negative Declaration and the comments received during the public review period; and that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the project applicant would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur; and, on the basis of the whole record before the decision-making body (including this Mitigated

Negative Declaration) that there is no substantial evidence that the project as revised will have a significant effect on the environment.

II. Required Mitigation Measures

Refer to the attached Environmental Initial Study for the rationale for requiring the following mitigation measures:

Biological Resources

- A. Impacts to disturbed coastal sage scrub will be mitigated through deduction of 1.86 acre coastal sage scrub credits at the County's Rancho San Diego Mitigation Bank (1.5:1 ratio).
- B. Impacts to southern willow scrub and freshwater marsh will be mitigated through restoration and enhancement of 3.51 acres of Spring Valley Creek (3:1 and 2:1 respectively). Portions of Spring Valley Creek that are east and south of Quarry Road are covered with dense stands of Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*) and Canary Island date (*Phoenix canariensis*) and Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) trees; which have removed much of the biological value of the creek. Restoration and enhancement will consist of removal of non-native species and replanting with native riparian species.
- C. Impacts to 0.13 acre of maritime succulent scrub will be mitigated through preservation of 0.26 acre of maritime succulent scrub at a County approved mitigation bank. Alternatively, mitigation may consist of restoration of 0.26 acre of maritime succulent scrub within the Sweetwater Valley Regional Park.
- D. Impacts to 7.12 acres of non-native grasslands will be mitigated at a 0.5:1 ratio. Credits totaling 3.56 acres will be deducted from the County of San Diego Rancho San Diego Mitigation Bank.
- E. Vegetation removal, grading, clearing, and any construction-related activities are restricted during the breeding season (February 1 to September 15 of any year) within 300 feet (500 feet for raptors) of natural habitat for types of raptors, California gnatcatcher least Bell's vireo, and other migratory birds. If a qualified biologist determines that no nesting birds are within 300 feet (500 feet for raptors), construction may proceed with written concurrence from the United

States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Biological monitoring is required during construction to evaluate the potential for indirect impacts to raptors, migratory birds, and other sensitive biological resources on site.

Cultural Resources

- A. A paleontological resource monitoring program is required and must be implemented by the contractor. Pursuant to the Grading Ordinance, if a fossil or fossil assemblage of greater than twelve inches in any dimension is encountered during excavation activities, all excavation operations in the area where the fossil or fossil assemblage was found shall be suspended immediately. The County's Permit Compliance Coordinator shall be notified and a qualified paleontologist shall be retained by the County to inspect the find and determine whether it is significant.
- B. If the qualified paleontologist determines that the fossil or fossil assemblage is significant, a mitigation program shall be implemented involving salvage, cleaning, and curation of the fossil(s) and associated documentation. If no fossils or fossil assemblages of greater than twelve inches in any dimension are encountered during excavation, a "No Fossils Found" letter must be submitted to the County Department of Planning and Land Use identifying the monitoring that was performed and confirming that no fossils were found. If one or more fossils or fossil assemblages are found, the qualified paleontologist shall prepare a report documenting the mitigation program, including field and laboratory methodology, location, geologic and stratigraphic setting, list(s) of collected fossils and the paleontological significance, if any, description of any analysis, conclusions, and references cited.

III. Critical Project Design Elements That Must Become Conditions of Approval

The following project design elements were either proposed in the project application or the result of compliance with specific environmental laws and regulations and were essential in reaching the conclusions within the attached Environmental Initial Study. While the following are not considered mitigation measures, their implementation must be assured to avoid potentially significant environmental effects.

Aesthetics

In addition to the requirements outlined in the Light Pollution Code, the proposed project will control outdoor lighting and sources of glare as follows:

- The project will not install outdoor lighting that directly illuminates neighboring properties.
- The project will not install outdoor lighting that would cast a direct beam angle toward a potential observer, such as a motorist, cyclist, or pedestrian.
- The project will not install outdoor lighting for vertical surfaces such as buildings, landscaping, or signs, in a manner that would result in useful light or spill light being cast beyond the boundaries of the intended area to be lit.
- The project will not install any highly reflective surfaces such as glare-producing glass or high-gloss surface color that will be visible along roadways, pedestrian walkways, or in the line of sight of adjacent properties.

Biological Resources

The following design measures are incorporated into the proposed project and will serve to avoid and minimize impacts to biological resources:

- Prior to the start of construction, all construction and staging area limits will be clearly identified with orange construction fencing to ensure that construction activities remain within the defined construction limits. A qualified biologist shall inspect the fencing prior to the start of construction and shall monitor activities during construction to avoid unauthorized impacts.
- During construction, all construction activities including, but not limited to, equipment storage, equipment cleaning, and stock piling, shall occur within the identified orange construction areas. All storage areas will be protected with the use of fiber rolls and/or silt fences. All construction staging areas shall be identified on site and construction plans.
- Natural drainage patterns will be maintained to the extent practicable during construction activities. Erosion control techniques, including the use of gravel

bags, hay bales, and/or the installation of sediment traps, will be incorporated into the erosion control plan for the proposed project.

- Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented during construction activities, which include, but are not limited to, storm drain inlet protection, stabilized construction entrance/exit areas, and silt fencing. Silt fences and fiber rolls shall be used to minimize surface transport of sediments. The construction contractor will be required to prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Implementation of BMPs as stated in the contract and SWPPP would reduce water quality impacts to below a level of significance.
- The use of motorized vehicles on trails shall be prohibited, except for wheelchairs, maintenance, and emergency vehicles.
- Physical and/or visual barriers shall be incorporated to protect sensitive habitats, sensitive species, and wetland habitats by directing users to designated trails using natural vegetation, topography, limited fencing, trail markers and signage.
- Foot traffic, equestrian activity, and bicycling are allowed only on designated trails.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times and are restricted to designated trails.
- To prevent potential dust damage to vegetation in the conserved habitat, spraying the construction site with water shall be conducted on an as-needed basis.
- Hunting of animals or waterfowl is prohibited.
- The release or transplantation of non-native animals, fish, or vegetation is prohibited. No collection of plants, plant material, wildlife, or historical artifacts is allowed.
- Trail lighting should not be permitted within wildlife habitat except where essential for roadways, facility use, and safety. Lighting within wildlife habitat or along its edges should be limited to low pressure sodium sources directed away and shielded from wildlife habitat.

- Trails will be 8 to 10 feet wide; however, trails proposed adjacent to areas of sensitive habitat, wetland habitats or wetland buffers shall be no greater than 4 feet wide.

Cultural Resources

- Trail alignments should avoid any previously identified archaeological and cultural resources.

Water Quality

- As part of the proposed project, an erosion control plan will be implemented with erosion control techniques, including the use of gravel bags, hay bales, and/or the installation of sediment traps. In addition, Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented during construction activities to avoid water quality impacts, polluted runoff, erosion, and sedimentation. BMPs include, but are not limited to, storm drain inlet protection, stabilized construction entrance/exit areas, and silt fencing. Silt fences and fiber rolls will be used to minimize surface transport of sediments. The construction contractor will be required to prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

In addition, the following site design measures, source control and treatment control BMPs will be implemented to reduce potential pollutants in runoff:

Site and Source Control BMPs

- The location of the proposed trail will be set back at least 100 feet from the high water level of the reservoir.
- A 6-foot chain linked fence will continue to protect the Sweetwater Reservoir from recreational trail users. At no point along the trail will a user be located between the reservoir and the chain linked fence. Any barbed wire installed at the top of chain linked fences along the trail corridor will be positioned away from the trail to ensure safety of equestrian users.
- Some of the chemicals used in “treated” wood, such as arsenic, are not acceptable for use in close proximity to a drinking water reservoir. Sweetwater

Authority's Water Quality Department should review and approve the use of any "treated" construction materials.

- Horses will be prohibited from entering the reservoir or any stream within 200 feet of the reservoir shoreline. Chain link fencing will be installed along the perimeter of the trail to prevent entry to the reservoir.
- The trail will be designed to sheet flow runoff towards the proposed BMPs (i.e. vegetated buffer strip and gravel gutter) to prevent rills and erosion.
- The trail will be periodically re-graded, as needed, to prevent rills from forming, to promote sheet flow, and to reduce erosion. The re-grading will be on an as-needed basis, but a minimum of one time per year at the end of the rainy season.
- Trail Segment 8 (the portion of the trail on Sweetwater Authority property) is subject to closure, without notice, for maintenance or operational activities, or should Sweetwater Authority, or any other regulatory agency, determine the safety of the stored water is jeopardized.
- The Proposed Rules and Regulations for trail use will require pet owners to pick up after their pets and dispose of any wastes in a proper location on or off-site. Pet waste bags will be provided for owners at staging areas. Signage will also be posted in designated areas as appropriate.
- Prior to opening the trail to public use, the County will contract with a licensed waste disposal facility to establish a schedule for waste removal. Horse manure will be removed from the trail on a weekly basis by County-contracted personnel. Storage containers will not be necessary as the manure will be removed offsite immediately. The County may also investigate the use of manure in composting operations as a less expensive alternative to the removal of waste to a disposal facility.
- Daily inspections may be necessary before, during, and after rain or storm events to ensure the integrity of the trail system. Manure, trash, litter and debris will be removed in a timely manner prior to a rain or storm event. If necessary, trails will be closed during severe rain events. Temporary signage will be installed at trail heads, staging areas, and/or at the adjacent Sweetwater Summit Regional Park during inclement weather advising users of trail closures.

- Trail maintenance will be performed by County-contracted personnel or volunteers on an as-needed basis to pick up trash and debris, smooth the trail, and to trim vegetation..
- Trail brochures and signage, indicating the reservoir is a source of domestic water supply and should not be polluted, will be provided to educate the public and discourage any type of pollution.
- Periodic assessment of trail conditions shall be conducted to address surface materials, drainage, vegetation clearing, signage, fencing, barriers, and any necessary repairs.

Treatment Control BMPs

- In areas where the trail is between 10 feet and 25 feet from the Urban Runoff Diversion System (URDS), a 12-inch gravel gutter and vegetated buffer strip, with a slope less than 15% sloping towards the reservoir, will be installed along the shoreward edge of the trail. The buffer strip will trap sediment, nutrients, trash, and organics and prevent them from migrating towards the reservoir.
- In areas where the trail is less than 10 feet from the URDS, a 12-inch gravel gutter and vegetated buffer strip as stated above will apply. In addition, an impervious barrier, landscaping edging, will be installed as close to the URDS system as possible.

ADOPTION STATEMENT: This Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted and above California Environmental Quality Act findings made by the:

_____ (Decision-Making Body)

on _____ (Date/Item #)

NELSON E. OLIVAS, Public Works Manager
Department of Public Works